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November 2, 200

Argument Essay- WRT105

Stop the “R” Word

I personally have started using the “r” word at a young age when all my friends and schoolmates introduced it to me. I never thought it had a negative connotation and used it as another word for “stupid.” It hit me now that I used it in front of a friend that had a mentally retarded brother. I think back to how it must have hurt her to see me, a friend, and strangers use that term so lightly without any thought of the after effects. People do not realize how the “r” word can hurt and offend so many people. It’s depressing to see that our society uses that word in everyday conversations, from the kid in kindergarten to doctors. Derogatory terms such as “r” word can consequence in extreme emotional pain and give the words negative meanings. The continuity of this word must end for it is changing the meaning of the word and affecting people with disabilities.

People use the “r” word lightly, without knowing all the consequences and effects it has. It is used in everyday conversations between children, adults and even medical professionals. The “r” word is offensive and many organizations that have to do with mental disabilities are now changing or have changed their names. Organizations that have the “r” word in the title have recognized the effect their title gives to others. For example, the Association for Retarded Citizens of the United States has been voted to change the group’s name to “The Arc” (Citing Retard). In a group of more than 20 organizations to help aid mental illness, their names and their websites do not contain the “r” word at all. People in the disability field realize that the “r” word is linked to negative meanings that are hurtful and they do not wish to be associated with that. There are many campaigns to stop the “r” word, such as r-word.org, therword.com and more. These organizations want to spread awareness of the word and how people are affected. One of the biggest sayings is “when you say “r,” someone hurts.” This word does not only hurt people that are mental ill but many others that believe it is a derogatory term and it is not right to call or reference someone that.

About 7.5 millions of Americans are mentally retarded and yet, the “r” is used daily in a negative way (Citing Retarded). Some people say that the “r” word is not offensive because they are not directly talking about a mental retarded person. This is incorrect because this word defines who these people are and they do not want to be associated with “stupid” or “idiot.” Ignorant people say that this word does not hurt but there is proof that it does. There are so many different organizations trying to stop this word. People are spreading awareness everyday but it will only work if people stop and listen.

Simi Linton in “Reassigning Meaning” writes of how words are given new meanings by people (Linton). The “r” word should not have negative side meanings. People have the right and freedom to choose what they are called. People with mental illnesses or disabilities have that right also. If they do not desire to be called the “r” word, then why should they have to be called that? Even if someone says the word without any mentally ill person around, it is still offensive. If one thinks about stealing a shirt from a clothing store but does not actually do it, is that person moral? The answer is no. Just like how one can say the “r” word without someone being there to be appalled at, it is still an offensive act because of the way the person is thinking about the word. He or she is changing the meaning of the word for the worse.

The continuity of this word must be stopped. There is no way to erase a word from the human language but it is possible for people to use it much less in a positive manner. With the work of advocates, organizations and the disability community, the “r” word will one day not be a derogatory term but they need help from the public. The public is the one giving the “r” word its meaning. The public is the one using this term in everyday language. The public needs to realize that this term is harmful to others even though it is not for them.

(When I started to write the essay, I realized how I needed much more evidence and claims. I will definitely be at your extra help hours.)

Works Cited

"Citing 'Retard' Slur, Group Changes Name." The New York Times 27 Oct. 1991: 1. Print.

<http://therword.org/cycle-of-hate/>

Linton, Simi. “Reassigning Meaning.” The Disabilities Studies. Ed. Lennard J. Davis. Third ed. New York, NY: Routledge, 1997. 223-236. Print.